

10

# STAR REACH

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# PARSIFAL

P. CRAIG RUSSELL

Klingsor turns from the two caught in his trap-- temptress and victim alike caught in his twisted necromantic net. The mad wizard exults in his coming triumph.

A  
FUTUNE  
KARMIC  
PRESENTATION

ART  
VISUAL DIRECTION

P. CRAIG RUSSELL

STORY

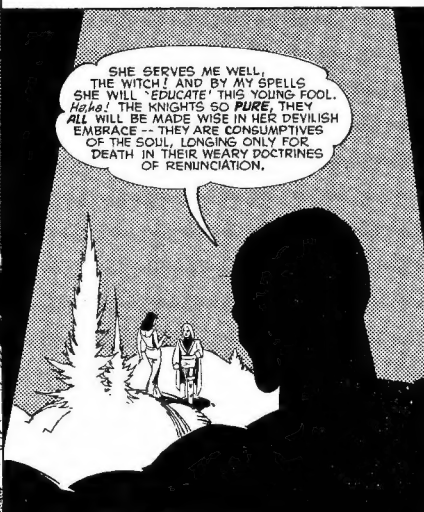
PATRICK C. MASON

LETTERING

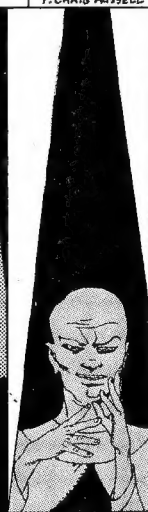
TOM ORZECZOWSKI

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P. CRAIG RUSSELL

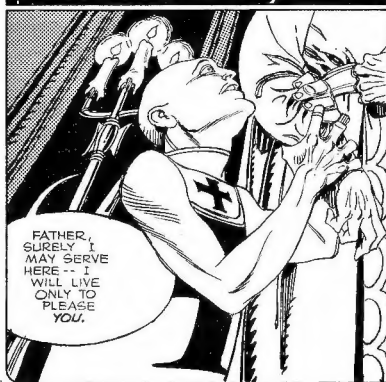
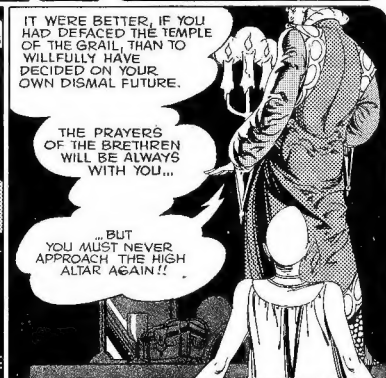
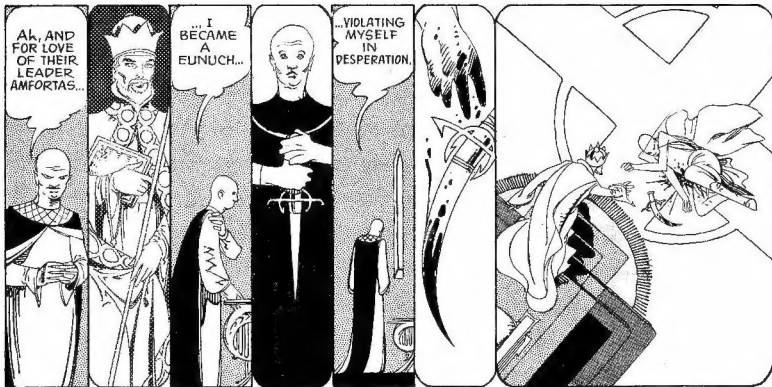


SHE SERVES ME WELL,  
THE WITCH! AND BY MY SPELLS  
SHE WILL 'EDUCATE' THIS YOUNG FOOL.  
Hehe! THE KNIGHTS SO PURE, THEY  
ALL WILL BE MADE WISE IN HER DEVILISH  
EMBRACE -- THEY ARE CONSUMPTIVES  
OF THE SOUL, LONGING ONLY FOR  
DEATH IN THEIR WEARY DOCTRINES  
OF RENUNCIATION.



I, TOO, ONCE CAST  
MY DELUDED, YOUTHFUL  
FANCY BEYOND MANKIND AND  
CREATED -- A CREATOR! THE  
HOME OF THE KNIGHTS OF THE  
GRAIL HARBOURED MY HUNGRY  
SPIRIT, FEEDING IT WITH  
POISONOUS RITUAL AND  
SUBSERVANCE.

BUT I WAS EAGER  
FOR PLEASURE AND WAS  
FAR TOO CLEVER FOR THAT  
WOMANISH BROOD OF DOLTS! I  
SHOULD HAVE KNOWN ALL THEIR  
TALK OF THE SOUL AND THE  
SOUL'S PEACE TO BE INSANITY--  
THE GRAIL IS THE SYMBOL  
OF THEIR EMPTY FAITH!





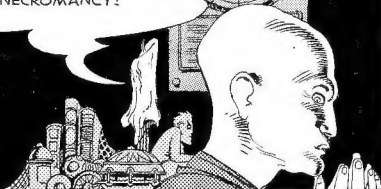


LEAVE  
MONSALVAT  
TONIGHT AND  
REPENT IN  
PRAYER AND  
FASTING.

REPENT?  
AFTER I HAD TAKEN  
THE FIRST STEP TO  
REAL FREEDOM?

**NO, AMFORTAS,  
MY HOLY CLOWN!**

PENANCE I DID, BUT NOT  
TO YOUR GOD! IN THE DARK  
CAVES OF MAGICIANS DID I BEND  
MY KNEE, MASTERING THE DIREST  
INCANTATIONS OF ALCHEMY  
AND NECROMANCY!



Oh, WHAT  
A WORLD OF  
PROFIT AND  
DELIGHT OF  
POWER AND  
HONOR IS  
PROMISED  
TO THE  
STUDIOUS  
ARTISAN.



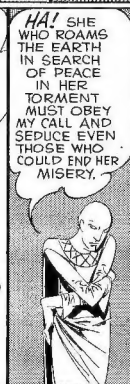
POWER I  
HAVE, AND  
A KINGDOM  
IN WHICH TO  
WIELD IT, A  
SPLENDID  
MCKEY OF  
THAT MOUNTAIN  
GRAVEYARD  
OF HIS.



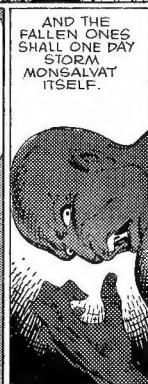
MY  
GARDEN HOLDS  
RARE  
BLOSSOMS  
TO ENTICE  
THE KNIGHTS  
WHO  
WOULD  
APPROACH  
ME -



AND WITH  
THE WITCH  
KUNDRY AT  
MY CALL  
I NEED NOT  
FEAR EVEN  
THE STRONGEST  
OF THEM!



**HA!** SHE  
WHO ROAMS  
THE EARTH  
IN SEARCH  
OF PEACE  
IN HER  
TORMENT  
MUST OBEY  
MY CALL AND  
SEDUCE EVEN  
THOSE WHO  
COULD END HER  
MISERY.



AND THE  
FALLEN ONES  
SHALL ONE DAY  
STORM  
MONSALVAT  
ITSELF.



**Ah! TO LOOK  
AMFORTAS IN THE  
FACE AGAIN!**



AND  
RELIEVE  
HIM OF HIS  
SHAMEFUL  
BURDEN!



WOMAN, YOU  
SPEAK HIS NAME!  
WHERE DOES KLINGSOR  
HIDE? AND WHERE  
ARE THE LOST  
BRETHREN...

WHY TRAVEL  
FURTHER, WEARY  
MAN? THE  
WICKED ONE'S  
CASTLE I SHALL  
SHOW IN THE MORNING.  
REST HERE WHERE  
I MAY SOOTH  
YOUR TROUBLED  
HEART.



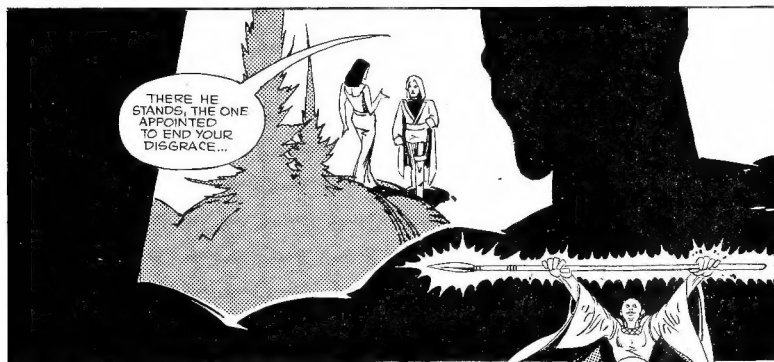
YES, YOU'VE  
ESCAPED ME,  
BUT THIS SPEAR,  
ONCE SO  
PRECIOUS TO  
YOU-- THE SPEAR  
THAT PIERCED YOUR  
SAYIOR'S SIDE-- IT  
LEAVES DEEP WOUNDS  
THAT NEVER CLOSE.  
YOU RULE AS A PRIEST,  
BUT THEY ALL KNOW YOU  
AS A SICK AND FALLEN  
MAN, UNWORTHY OF  
YOUR OFFICE.



EVEN NOW  
YOU HOPE FOR  
DELIVERANCE,  
AS TOLD YOU  
IN A VISION.



THERE HE  
STANDS, THE ONE  
APPOINTED  
TO END YOUR  
DISGRACE...



..BUT I SHALL SEE HIM  
AT MY FEET! I SHALL  
SEE HIM BINDING YOU,  
PRIEST, FOR TORTURE!  
I SHALL RULE YOU ALL  
WHEN AT LAST I HAVE  
THE *GRAIL*!



**NIGHT: THE MAGIC OF KUNDRY'S VOICE AND HER AGELESS CHARMS SOON DRAW THE VEIL OF IGNORANCE FROM PARSIFAL WHICH HE HAS LEARNED TO ACCEPT.**

FOR, WHAT  
BROUGHT YOU HERE  
IF NOT THE DESIRE  
TO KNOW?



HE PRESSES THE COIN IN HIS HAND. ITS COOLNESS REMINDS HIM OF HER VOICE AND HE SENSES, WITH TERROR, THE IRRESISTIBLE SORCERY WHICH MAKES HIM TRUST HER.

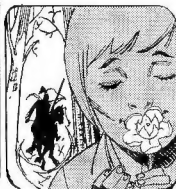
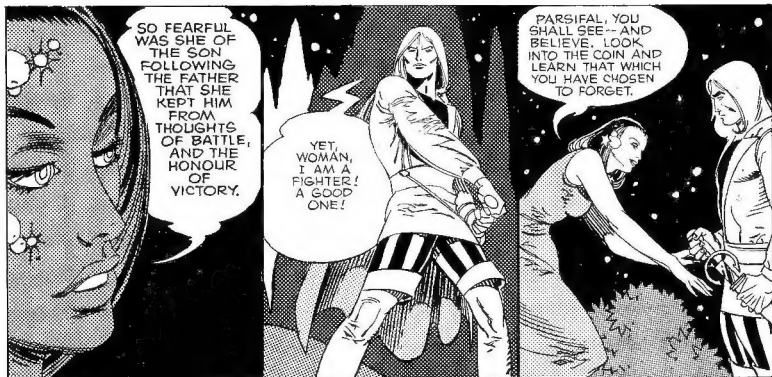
FROM WHERE HAVE  
YOU COME, LADY, THAT  
YOU KNOW MY NAME  
AND JOURNEY?

FAR AWAY IS MY  
HOME, AND MUCH HAVE  
I SEEN. I SAW THE CHILD  
ON HIS MOTHER'S BREAST.  
I HEARD HIS FIRST  
LAUGHTER AS  
**HERZELEIDE** POURED  
OUT HER LOVE TO  
THE BABE.

AND I SAW  
THE TEAR WHICH HE  
DID NOT SEE AS HER HEART,  
FULL OF AFFLICTION, YEARNED  
FOR HIS FATHER, **GAMURET**,  
GONE TO KNIGHTLY  
COMBAT IN THE  
NORTH!

MY FATHER...  
**GAMURET**...





COME,  
MY SON! UP  
FROM THE  
GROUND. YOU  
NEEDN'T BE  
FRIGHTENED  
OF  
GAWAIN.



SIR,  
FORGIVE  
ME BUT I  
MISTOOK YOU  
FOR MY FATHER  
GAMURET, ALSO  
A KNIGHT. HE  
HAS BEEN GONE  
MANY MONTHS  
AND I LOOK  
FOR HIM IN  
EVERY  
HOOFBEAT  
THAT WE  
HEAR!



GAMURET...  
SO HE  
DOESN'T  
KNOW  
THAT HIS  
FATHER  
IS DEAD.

I KNOW YOUR  
FATHER WELL. YOU  
ARE HIS SON,  
PARSIFAL,  
ARE YOU  
NOT?



YES, SIR

WHY DO  
YOU WANDER  
THIS FOREST  
WITHOUT A  
SWORD,  
PARSIFAL?



MOTHER...  
er, ah...  
LADY  
HERZELEIDE  
HAS TOLD  
ME THAT  
I AM  
TOO YOUNG.

BUT WHEN  
FATHER  
COMES  
HOME I  
SHALL BE  
HIS SQUIRE!



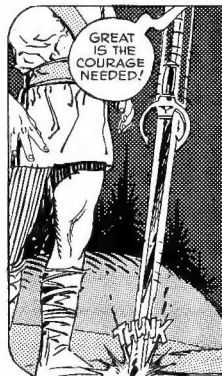
YOU ARE  
DISGRACING  
YOUR FATHER  
BY KEEPING  
TO HOME AT  
YOUR AGE!



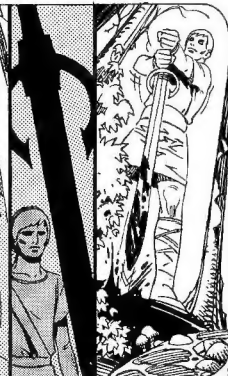
IT IS IN THE  
WORLD THAT ALL  
GREAT DEEDS ARE  
DONE. PARSIFAL--  
LEAVE HOME THIS  
DAY, THIS HOUR.  
YOU MUST SEARCH  
FOR MANY SECRETS  
AND PASS  
THROUGH MANY  
TRIALS.



GREAT  
IS THE  
COURAGE  
NEEDED!



GOD  
BE WITH  
YOU!



MY  
FATHER  
DEAD..

MY  
MOTHER  
DESERTED...

O  
CRUEL  
WISDOM  
THAT  
REVEALS  
THIS TO  
ME!

YOUR  
MOTHER.  
WOULD YOU  
SEE HER  
AGAIN?

THE LADY HERZELEIDE  
STANDS, PALE AND WORN,  
IN THE HALF DOORWAY  
OF THE FORSAKEN  
HOUSE AT SUNSET AS  
SHE HAS DONE EVERY  
EVENING SINCE  
PARSIFAL VANISHED.

MY SON, OH, THAT  
THE COMING NIGHT  
WOULD BRING YOU  
TO YOUR MOTHER'S  
ARMS AGAIN.  
ROBBED OF SLEEP  
AT NIGHT AND PEACE  
BY DAY -- MY LOVER  
DEAD, MY SON  
STOLEN BY  
SOME...

O,  
dear  
God

SHE TREADS SLOWLY TO HER BED, SICK  
WITH GRIEF, AND SUMMONS HER QUIET  
STRENGTH TO A FINAL TEST

DEAREST SAVIOR,  
HEAR MY PRAYER.  
LOOK NOT ON MY  
ANGUISH, HEED NOT MY  
TEARS, BUT HASTEN FROM  
ME TO MY LOST SON  
THAT HE MAY KNOW  
YOUR BLESSING.

O LORD--

SHALL HE  
NEVER FEEL...

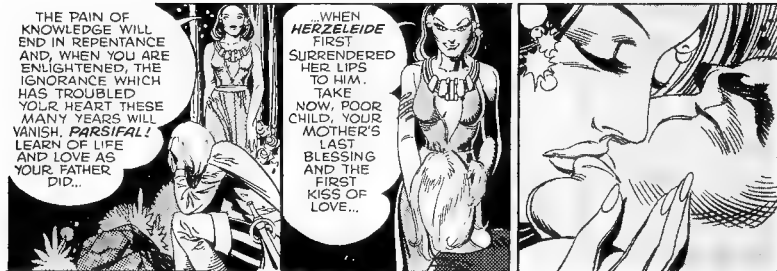
...A  
DYING

MOTHER'S

KISS

THE PAIN OF KNOWLEDGE WILL END IN REPENTANCE AND, WHEN YOU ARE ENLIGHTENED, THE IGNORANCE WHICH HAS TROUBLED YOUR HEART THESE MANY YEARS WILL VANISH, **PARSIFAL!** LEARN OF LIFE AND LOVE AS YOUR FATHER DID...

...WHEN **HERZELEIDE** FIRST SURRENDERED HER LIPS TO HIM. TAKE NOW, POOR CHILD, YOUR MOTHER'S LAST BLESSING AND THE FIRST KISS OF LOVE...



**KUNDRY'S SEDUCTION IS COMPLETE-- BUT AS PARSIFAL RELEASES HIS GRIP ON THE MAGIC COIN HE HAS BEEN HOLDING, HIS MIND IS BATTERED WITH FRAGMENTS OF MEMORIES...**




THE PAIN WHICH AMFORTAS FELT NOW WRACKS HIS BODY AND HE DIMLY SEES HIS DESTINY THREATENED BY THE VOLUPTUOUS KUNDRY, A DESTINY HE DOES NOT YET UNDERSTAND...

TO BE CONTINUED...







"I HAD INSULTED  
SALIVE AL VAHMET,  
THE RULING VIZIR  
OF MY DISTRICT.

"VAHMET WAS A  
CRUEL MAN AND A  
MASTER IN THE  
DARKER ARTS  
OF SORCERY.

# NYPHONECROMANIA

by Mike Vosburg

with Linda Lovecraft

letters by ORZ.

"FOR HIS  
REVENGE, VAHMET  
HAD TAKEN ME INSIDE  
HIS POWER SOURCE, A  
COLOSSAL GLOBE CALLED  
THE 'HEART OF  
KADATH'..."

"... TO OFFER  
MY BODY TO  
UNCOUTHLLI,  
SON OF  
CTHULU.

"AFTER POSSESSING ME,  
UNCOUTHLLI WOULD BRING  
MY SOUL TO HIS FATHER,  
WHO WOULD  
AMPLY REWARD  
SALIVE AL VAHMET.

"I HAD GIVEN UP ALL  
HOPE WHEN SUDDENLY A  
FAMILIAR VOICE RANG OUT..."



"YAHMET'S OPPONENT WAS ABDUL ALHAZRED, ALSO KNOWN AS THE 'MAD ARAB'..."



"HE WAS THE AUTHOR OF THE *NECRONOMICON*... A VERY POWERFUL SORCERER..."

"...MY INSTRUCTOR IN THE MYSTIC ARTS..."

"MAYBE I SHOULD EXPLAIN.

"I WAS A  
DANCER IN  
A CASBAH  
IN ULTHAR.

"ONE NIGHT  
VAHMET WAS  
IN THE CROWD.  
I WAS  
UNAWARE  
OF HIS  
PRESENCE  
UNTIL ...

"I STOOD FROZEN IN HIS  
GRASP... KNOWING THAT  
REFUSING VAHMET MEANT  
DEATH... OR WORSE!  
THEN...

YOU'RE  
THE WET  
LITTLE FLOWER  
I'VE BEEN  
LOOKING FOR  
TONIGHT.

WHAT!?

YOU WILL  
COME TO MY  
PALACE... NOW!

WHO  
DARES  
TOUCH  
ME?

I... KÄRLETCH.

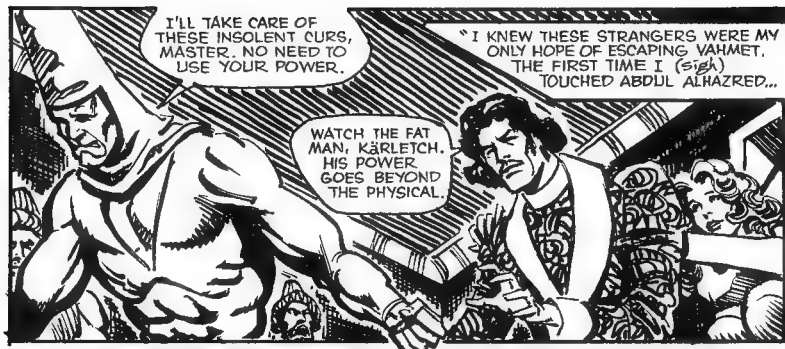
A MAN WHO USES  
POWER TO FRIGHTEN  
THE WEAK HAS  
NO POWER.

LET HER  
BE OR FACE  
MY 'TOUCH'.

HER... YES! I'LL  
HAVE HER SOON  
ENOUGH.

AS FOR  
YOU TWO...

GUARDS!!



I'LL TAKE CARE OF THESE INSOLENT CURS, MASTER. NO NEED TO USE YOUR POWER.

"I KNEW THESE STRANGERS WERE MY ONLY HOPE OF ESCAPING VAHMET. THE FIRST TIME I (sigh) TOUCHED ABDUL ALHAZRED...

WATCH THE FAT MAN, KÄRLETCH. HIS POWER GOES BEYOND THE PHYSICAL.



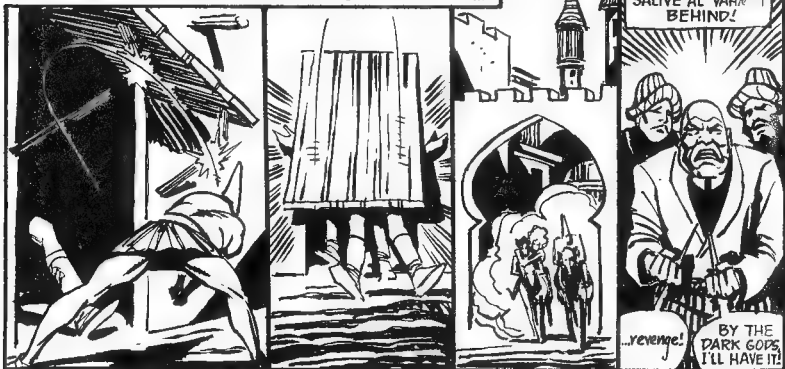
YEARS OF TRAINING WITH ABDUL HAVE TAUGHT ME THAT WHEN A SORCERER'S GUARD IS DOWN...

"...WAS TO SHOW HIM THE BACK WAY OUT OF THE CASBAH.

"...IS THE MOMENT TO STRIKE!

THIS WAY, KÄRLETCH!

\*BY SLOWING VAHMET'S GUARDS, KÄRLETCH GAVE US A FEW SECONDS TO GRAB THE HORSES AND BE OFF...



"...LEAVING A LIVING SALIVE AL VAH! BEHIND!

...revenge!

BY THE DARK GODS, I'LL HAVE IT!

1 "ABDUL AND KÄRLECH BROUGHT ME TO THEIR HOUSE IN SARNATH, A SMALL CITY ON THE BORDER OF VAHMET'S DISTRICT. ALHAZRED WAS A MASTER SORCERER, FEARED THROUGHOUT THE LAND. YET, IN TRUTH, NO MORE KIND NOR GENTLE MAN EXISTED. RAISED IN POVERTY, ONLY MY DANCING SAVED ME FROM SELLING MYSELF TO SURVIVE. AT EIGHTEEN, THE MOST I COULD HOPE FOR IN LIFE WAS TO EVENTUALLY BECOME THE SERVANT AND CONCUBINE OF A JUST MASTER. AS I WAS ALREADY MADLY IN LOVE WITH ABDUL, IT SEEMED AS IF ALL MY DREAMS HAD COME TRUE.

2 "HOWEVER, THIS WAS NOT TO BE.

"KÄRLECH CONSIDERED IT HIS DUTY AND PRIVILEGE TO BE THE ONLY SERVANT TO ALHAZRED. AND ABDUL TOOK NO STEPS TO MAKE ME HIS CONCUBINE.

"INSTEAD, DISCOVERING I WAS ILLITERATE, HE BEGAN TO EDUCATE ME. DRIVEN ON BY MY OBSESSION WITH HIM, I WAS AN APT PUPIL. AFTER SOME MONTHS THE LESSONS TOOK A DIFFERENT DIRECTION AND I BEGAN MY STUDY OF SORCERY.

"ABDUL ALWAYS CLAIMED THE POWER NECESSARY TO BECOME A SORCERER WAS A **GIFT**-- FROM WHERE, EVEN HE DIDN'T KNOW. KÄRLECH WAS FAR TOO PRAGMATIC TO HAVE THAT GIFT. I HAD **SOME** TALENT, BUT IT WAS DULLED BY MY DESIRE FOR IMMEDIATE GRATIFICATION. I DID, AND STILL DO, LIVE FOR THE MOMENT.





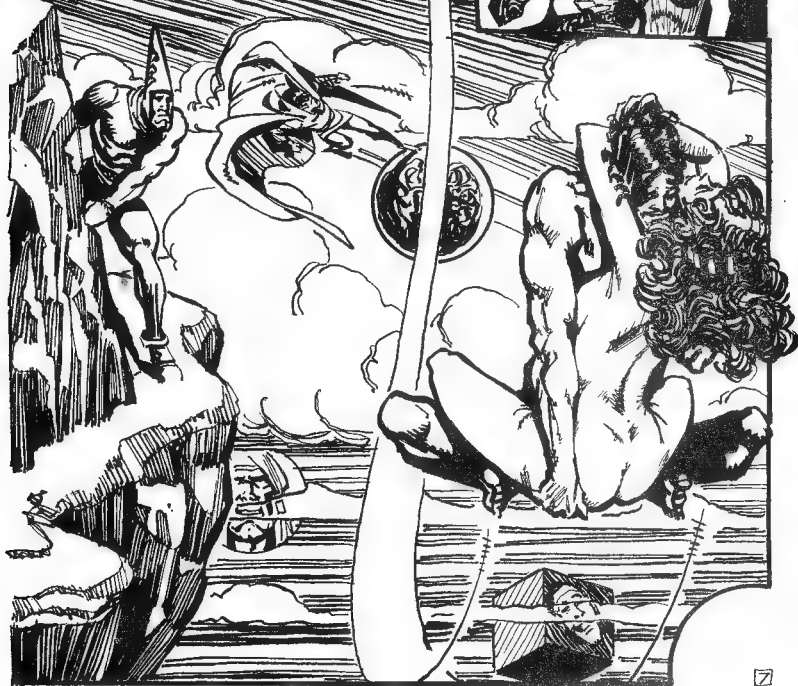
3 "BUT TO ABDUL,  
SORCERY WAS THE END-ALL OF EXISTANCE.

HE HAD THE PATIENCE TO QUIET HIS  
PHYSICAL BEING AND MERGE WITH THE  
COSMOS...TO ENTER A DIFFERENT WORLD--  
A TRICK THAT TOOK SOME TIME TO  
TEACH ME, EVEN IN ITS MOST  
RUDIMENTARY FORM.

"IT WAS ONLY WHEN I FINALLY  
ENTERED THIS **SORCERER'S**  
WORLD, THAT STRANGELY BEAUTIFUL  
YET MONSTROUS PLACE OF PARADOX,  
THAT MY RELATIONSHIP WITH ABDUL  
CHANGED. IT WAS HERE THAT MY SAD-  
EYED INSTRUCTOR FELT TRULY AT  
PEACE. AND IT WAS HERE THAT I  
DISCOVERED MY 'WEAKNESS' COULD BE  
MY STRENGTH. FOR AS I LIVED FOR  
PHYSICAL SENSATIONS IN A WORLD OF  
REALITY, AS A SORCERER I COULD MAKE  
OTHERS FEEL THE INTENSITY OF MY  
TOTAL PHYSICAL EXPERIENCE.

"THUS, IN THE SORCERER'S WORLD, ABDUL  
BECAME TRULY MINE AND MINE ALONE.

4 "BUT IN THE MIDST OF THIS  
IDYLIC LIFE A CLOUD OF  
APPREHENSION HUNG OVER  
ME. WHILE THE JOYS OF  
SORCERY SATISFIED ME, THEY  
ONLY WHETTED ABDUL'S  
**APPETITE.** I FEARED  
FOR HIM.



"FROM TIME TO TIME ABDUL AND KÄRLETCH WOULD LEAVE OUR HOME IN SARNATH FOR VARIOUS SORCERY-CONNECTED MISSIONS. I WAS ALONE... BUT UNAFRAID.

"UNFORTUNATELY, WE WERE UNAWARE OF THE LIMITS OF VAHMET'S RAGE...

"ONE OF HIS SPIES  
CAUGHT SIGHT OF ME  
BIDDING ABDUL GOODBYE.

"THAT NIGHT I WAS KIDNAPPED AND BROUGHT TO SALVE AL VAHMET.

"A TRAIL WAS LEFT FOR ABDUL AT VAHMET'S  
INSTRUCTION, SO HE AND KÄRLETCH  
WOULD BE DRAWN INTO A TRAP.

"AND THAT WAS HOW I CAME TO  
BE UPON THE ALTAR, WATCHING  
TWO SORCERERS DUEL, THE  
FATE OF MYSELF AND MY  
LOVER IN THE BALANCE.

"I WON'T BORE YOU WITH  
A DESCRIPTION OF THE  
BATTLE FOUGHT IN THE  
'HEART OF KADATH'.



"ON EVEN TERMS SALIVE WOULD HAVE BEEN NO MATCH FOR ABDUL, BUT IN THE 'HEART OF KADATH' THE FIGHT BETWEEN THE TWO SORCERERS WAS A STANDOFF.



"NEITHER WIZARD WAS ABLE TO SUMMON THE POWER TO DESTROY THE OTHER, NOR WILLING TO RETREAT.



"HOWEVER, KARLECH WAS OVERWHELMING TO THE SOFT-LIVING DEMON, AND UNCOUTHLY SOON REALIZED HIS FLIGHT...



"...AND IN HIS FEAR CALLED OUT TO HIS FATHER... CTHULHU.



QUICKLY! IF CTHULHU ENTERS THE 'HEART OF KADATH' WE WILL ALL BE TRAPPED IN INFINITY, AT THE MERCY OF HIS WHIM. WE MUST ESCAPE THIS PLACE... **NOW!!**

I THOUGHT YOU WERE **MASTER** HERE, SALIVE.

THE ELDER GODS ARE *SPORTSMEN*, IF NOTHING ELSE, SALIVE. CTHULHU MIGHT *ENJOY* THE BATTLE BETWEEN YOU AND I... THE WINNER COULD HAVE ETERNITY TO PLEAD HIS CASE...

NO! CTHULHU WOULD DESTROY US BOTH! PLEASE... WE MUST GO NOW!!

KÄRLETCH, TAKE SHAHADAREBA AND FLEE!

BUT... YES, MASTER.

Ok ABDUL... I MUST BE WITH YOU... MY LIFE WOULD BE NOTHING WITHOUT YOU... *PLEASE!* COME WITH US!

WE'LL MEET AGAIN, SHAHADAREBA.

I'LL DEFEAT SALIVE IN TIME... AND AFTER A FEW CENTURIES CTHULHU WILL GROW TIRED OF MY METAPHYSICAL QUESTIONS AND RELEASE ME BACK TO THE PLANE OF EARTH. AND THEN YOU AND I WILL HAVE A MULTITUDE OF LIFE-TIMES TOGETHER.

NO!

NO! ABDUL NO!

PAPA... PAPA... PAPA...



"AS KÄRLETCH CARRIED ME FROM THE 'HEART OF KADATH' I HEARD THE WHIMPERING CRIES OF UNCOUTHU DIE AWAY AS A SLUSHING SOUND SEEMED TO FILL THE GLOBE.



"CTHULHU HAD COME. THE ORB SHIMMERED AND GLOWED WITH THE PRESENCE OF THE ELDER GOD. A HORRIBLE SCREAM OF FEAR WAS HEARD FROM SALIVE... FOLLOWED BY A HOLLOW LAUGH FROM ABDUL AS IF HE REALIZED HE WAS PART OF A JOKE TOO OBSCURE TO BE REPEATED.



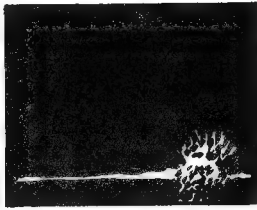
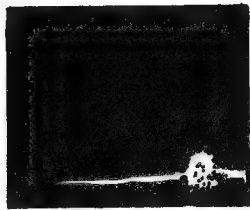
"AND THEN THE 'HEART OF KARATH' BURST AMID A CARNAGE OF NOISE...

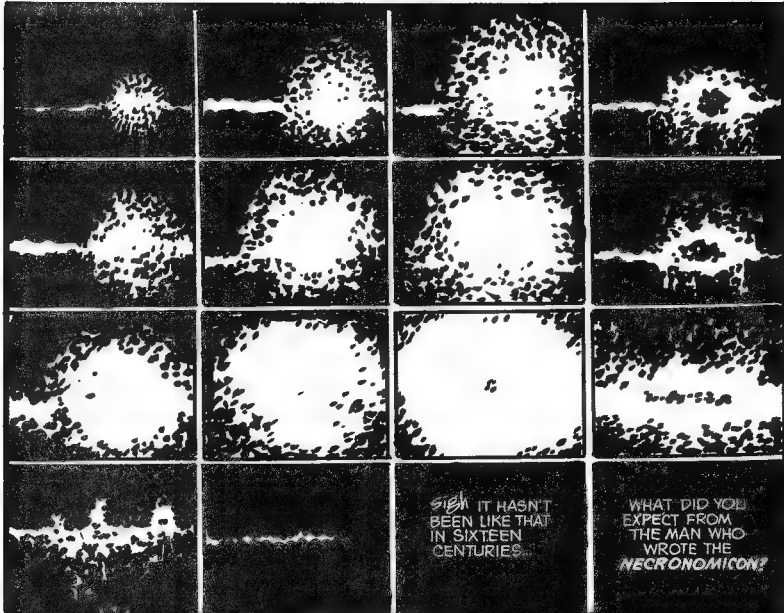


"...ONLY KÄRLETCH REMAINED TO COMFORT ME.

"AND MY ONLY THOUGHT WAS THAT I'D NEVER SEE MY BELOVED ABDUL AGAIN.







SIGH IT HASN'T  
BEEN LIKE THAT  
IN SIXTEEN  
CENTURIES.

WHAT DID YOU  
EXPECT FROM  
THE MAN WHO  
WROTE THE  
**NECRONOMICON?**



PERHAPS IT BEGAN THE DAY  
MARIAH'S YOUNG DREAMS  
SHATTERED, HER LOVE REJECTED...  
PERHAPS IT WENT BACK FURTHER...



WHO REALLY  
KNOWS WHEN  
THE DEMONS  
ARE BORN?



WHAT WE DO KNOW IS  
THAT THEY NURTURE  
ON PAIN, FEED ON FEAR.

AND IF THEIR SUSTENANCE GOES  
UNCHECKED, THEY GROW INTO  
UNFETTERED FORCES OF  
OVERWHELMING POWER...



IN MARIAH'S LIFE, HER PAIN WAS  
SO GREAT HER DEMON WITHIN  
GREW SWIFTLY, UNTIL SOON IT  
THREATENED HER VERY EXISTENCE...

I CAN END YOUR  
PAIN! JOIN ME...  
JOIN ME IN  
DEATH!



NO!

I DON'T KNOW WHAT  
YOU ARE OR WHERE  
YOU CAME FROM...

BUT  
I WILL  
LIVE!

# Mariah

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FRIEDRICH &  
LEE MARRS -

Story: FRIEDRICH  
Art: MARRS  
Letters: ORZECOWSKI

VERY WELL, BUT WE SHALL LIVE TOGETHER. NONE SHALL SHARE YOUR SOUL SAVE I!

EVEN AS MARIAH WON A SURVIVAL BATTLE, SHE THEN BEGAN TO LOSE THE QUALITY WAR.

I MUST HAVE GOTTEN TOO INVOLVED... HAVE TO PROTECT MYSELF SO THAT... THAT CAN NEVER COME BACK!... WHATEVER THAT... THAT... WAS... IT'S GONE NOW. IT HAS TO BE!

AND SO MARIAH SURVIVED... BUT THERE IS MORE TO LIFE THAN SURVIVAL. IT IS LIFE'S QUALITY THAT COUNTS...

WH-WHAT CAME OVER ME, TRYING TO KILL MYSELF?

KEY WORDS, THESE... REVEALING REPRESSION AND SELF-DELUSION. DEMONIC WEAPONS IF EVER THERE WERE.

OBSERVE...

HEY, THIS PIECE IS REALLY INTERESTING. WHO DID IT?

NAME'S ON THE BOTTOM, KID-- UNDER THE PRICE!

THAT'S MY WORK, MIZ.

REALLY! IT'S FASCINATING! I'VE NEVER KNOWN AN ACTUAL ARTIST BEFORE! IT'S SO... SPIRITUAL!

"SPIRITUAL", huh?

BUT, MAYBE TOO SPIRITUAL. I GUESS I'M ALWAYS TOO TENSE THE FIRST TIME...

HEY, ARE YOU GONNA GET HEAVY ON ME? PLAYING SHOULD BE LIGHT, RIGHT?

THE DEMON WITHIN HER BEGAN A SILENT CHUCKLE. MARIAH IGNORED IT...

MARIAH THEN BECAME **RESTLESS**, FEELING A GROWING THIRST FOR ADVENTURE...

I'M IN A RUT--  
I'VE GOT TO  
START FRESH...

...AND HERE  
MAY BE JUST  
THE WAY.

IS THIS THE  
SHY KID WE'VE  
SEEN HERE  
EVERY WINTER-  
IN-TOWN?

YEP! SURE SEEMS  
**DETERMINED!**  
SHE'LL MAKE A  
GOOD RECRUIT!

THE FIRST  
CAMPAIGN

HEY, MARIAH,  
WHATCHA **DOIN'**  
TONIGHT?

OH, I DON'T KNOW...WHAT  
DO YOU HAVE IN MIND?

ACTUALLY, YOU USUALLY  
ACT SO **RESERVED**. I  
DIDN'T THINK YOU'D WANT  
TO TAKE UP WITH **ME!**  
ESPECIALLY **SHARING**...

WHY NOT? BEDDING'S AN OLD  
SOLDIERING TRADITION. WE  
SHARE OUR JOB'S RISK, JACE.  
WHY NOT SHARE OUR **PLAY?**

JACE FELT A CHILL **BREEZE** INSIDE... HE NEVER  
RETURNED... AND THE SILENT CHUCKLE BECAME  
A SILENT **LAUGH**: MARIAH WOULD HEAR IT NOT...

A YEAR LATER, THE SECOND CAMPAIGN...

...FUCKIN' **RAIN!** DON'CHA EVER LONG  
FOR A YEAR-ROUND ROOF, MARIAH?

YEAH, I SUPPOSE I DO, BRYCE...  
I WOULD LIKE TO GET TO  
**SURMERICA** BEFORE THEN...





SURMERICA?  
WHAT'S DOWN  
THERE?

OK, I DON'T KNOW,  
BRYCE. IT'LL BE FUN,  
I GUESS. SPEAKING  
OF FUN, DID YOU  
SLOSH OVER HERE TO  
JAW OR PLAY, huh?

BRYCE SHUDDERED INSIDE AND NEVER  
RETURNED... AND THE SILENT LAUGH  
BECAME A SILENT ROAR, YET MARIAH  
STILL REFUSED TO HEAR...



THAT FALL ...

ANOTHER CAMPAIGN OVER,  
HUH? WELCOME BACK.

HEY, MARIAH! SOME GUY  
LEFT YOU SOMETHING!  
GOT IT WITH THE REST OF  
YOUR JUNK THAT'S PILED UP...



...HERE.

OK! HOW  
LOVELY!

IT'S FROM MAYAK!  
WELL, OF ALL  
PEOPLE...



... YEAH, I'VE GOT MY OWN PLACE NOW... OTHERS'  
WORK MOSTLY, THOUGH A BIT OF MY OWN...

WELL, WHOSE  
IDEA WAS THIS?

THAT DESIGN'S  
MINE, THOUGH A  
FRIEND DID THE  
ACTUAL WORK. I  
CALL IT "STARR".

I CAN'T TELL YOU HOW EXCITED I GOT WHEN  
I FIRST SAW IT! LET'S GO INSIDE...



OH!! SO THIS IS  
WHAT WE MISSED  
THAT NIGHT  
BACK WHEN!



YEAH, NOW I CAN'T SEE WHY  
WE WAITED SO LONG!

WELL, WHEN YOU'RE  
WINTERING NEARBY,  
DON'T FORGET THAT  
I'M HERE!

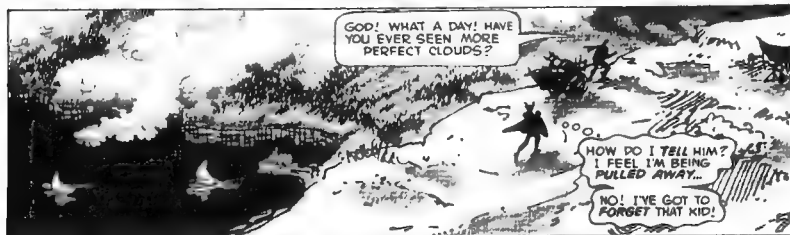
DON'T  
WORRY!





MAYA'K TOO NOW FEELS AN INNER CHILL, BUT SHRUGS IT OFF, WHILE MARIAH, HER BLINDERS STILL FIRMLY IN PLACE, RUSHES FULL SPEED AHEAD DOWN A WELL-OILED SLIDE...







NEVER DID  
WANT YOU...

BUT MORE CHILLING THAN THE  
BLADE WAS A HURRICANE  
VOICE THAT EXPLODED WITHIN  
MAYAK'S SKULL... A VOICE  
HE WOULD NEVER FORGET...

**NONE SHALL SHARE  
HER SOUL SAVE I!**





THE ONCE - BENIGN SILENCE OF SPACE NOW SEEMS MALEVOLENT TO ME, ITS VERY FIBRE RENT BY WHATEVER PRESENCE HAS SHAKEN THIS VESSEL TO ITS DEPTHS.

IT IS A MOST PECULIAR AND SUBTLE TERROR WHICH PURSUES ME. I FEAR FOR MORE THAN MY LIFE, I ALMOST FEAR FOR THE VERY SOUL OF MAN. YET, ALL THE APPREHENSION RETREATS TO THE UBIQUITOUS QUIET.

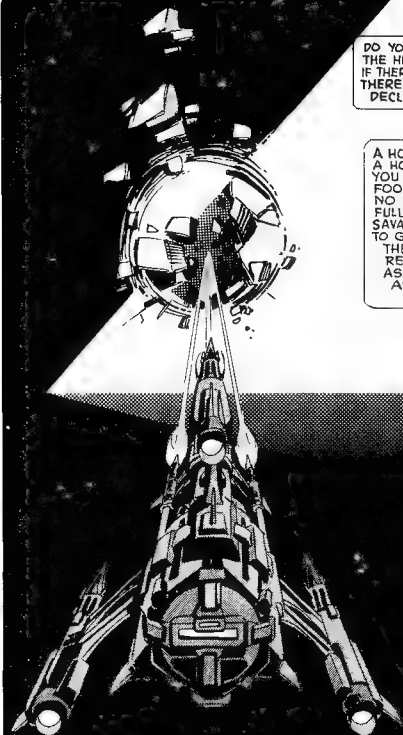
I AM NOW TOO FRIGHTENED TO THINK MYSELF INSOLENT, OR HERETICAL. I AM NOT BOUND TO STARVE MYSELF WITH DOUBT. THE HAND OF GOD HAS LAID THE WAY, CALLING MY TEMPTATIONS, TRIBULATIONS AND ANXIETIES TO TASK. CAN MY FEARS POSSIBLY BE MY STRENGTH?

FOR THE BRIEFEST MOMENT THE PAROXYSM MADE ME THINK OF NOTHING SO MUCH AS MY STATION AT THE MISSION OF ST. PETER IN SAMOA SOME SIX YEARS AGO. WHAT A TERRIBLE TIME IT SEEMED. THE FIERCE EARTHQUAKES LACED THE COUNTRY. I REMEMBER THE TENUOUS HOLD THE PEOPLE HAD UPON THEIR PROPERTY, THEIR POSSESSIONS, EVEN THEIR LIVES. THE FEAR THAT APPEARED SO REAL TO ME THEN SEEMS SO INSIGNIFICANT NOW WHEN COMPARED TO THE APOCRYPHAL MENACE I NOW CONFRONT.

I PRAY THAT WE FACE THIS IN THE DEVOUT FASHION OF HISTORIC CHRISTENDOM. THAT FOLLOWING JOSHUA UPON HIS HEAVENLY STEED THUNDERING THROUGH THESE DIABOLIC MYSTERIES BEAVING THEM PROSTRATE AND PULL WILL BE ENOUGH.

the  
**S**acred  
and the  
**P**rofane

dispositio:



DO YOU REALIZE WHAT THE HELL YOU'VE DONE!? IF THERE IS ANYONE THERE, YOU'VE JUST DECLARED **WAR!**

...a holy war...

A HOLY WAR? A HOLY WAR! YOU POMPOUS FOOL! THAT IS NO WARSHIP FULL OF PAGAN SAVAGES! PRAY TO GOD THAT THEY DON'T RETALIATE AS RASHLY AS YOU!

IT'S FROM THE PIT -

JOSHUA -- SNAP OUT OF IT!

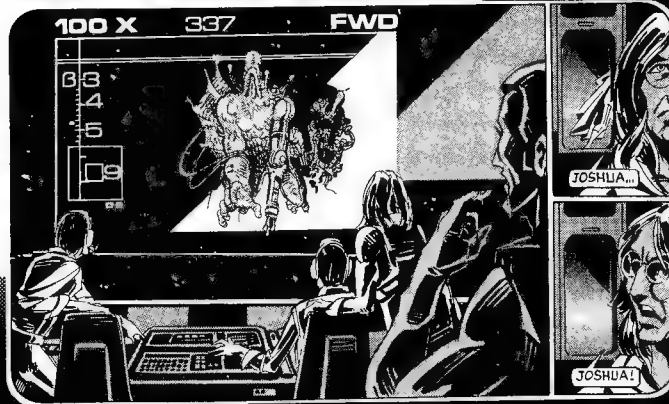
# pattern of wounds

author  
Dean Motter  
illustrator  
Ken Steacy



AAAH! DAMN YOU!

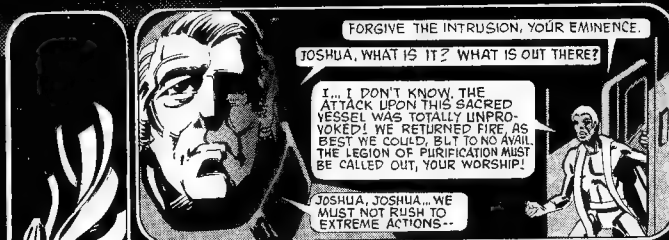
ARCH-BISHOP I THINK YOU'D BETTER HAVE A LOOK AT THIS!



100 X 337 FWD

JOSHUA...

JOSHUA!



FORGIVE THE INTRUSION, YOUR EMINENCE.

JOSHUA, WHAT IS IT? WHAT IS OUT THERE?

I... I DON'T KNOW. THE ATTACK UPON THIS SACRED VESSEL WAS TOTALLY UNPROVOKED! WE RETURNED FIRE, AS BEST WE COULD, BUT TO NO AVAIL. THE LEGION OF PURIFICATION MUST BE CALLED OUT, YOUR WORSHIP!

JOSHUA, JOSHUA... WE MUST NOT RUSH TO EXTREME ACTIONS--



I ASSURE YOU, THEY ARE MOST VITALLY REQUIRED; EVEN NOW THEY ARE GATHERING THEIR FORCES. SEE FOR YOURSELF.

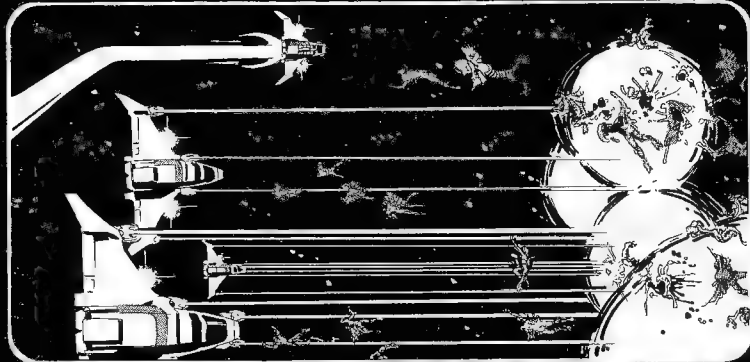
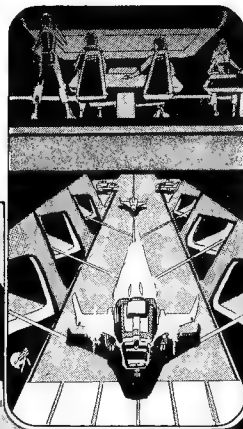
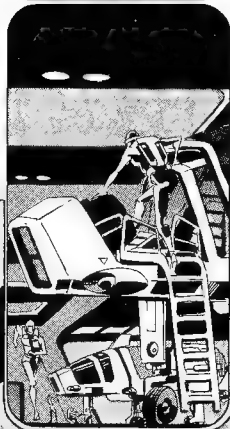
WHAT HEinous THINGS.

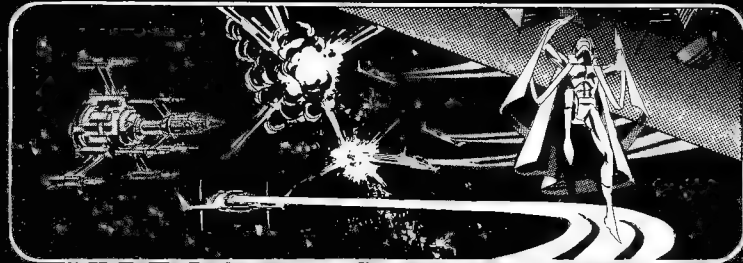
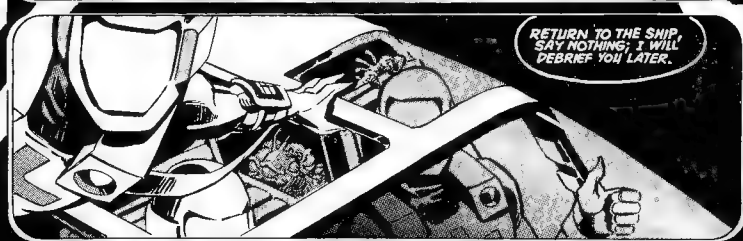
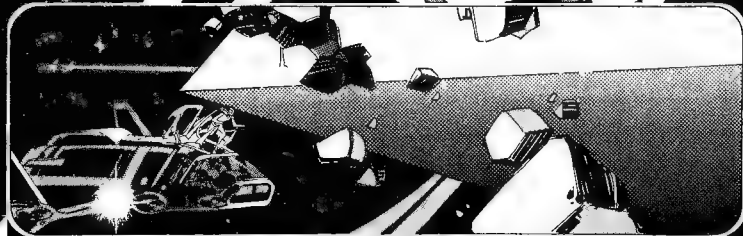
UNHOLY ABOMINATIONS! NOW, JOSHUA--

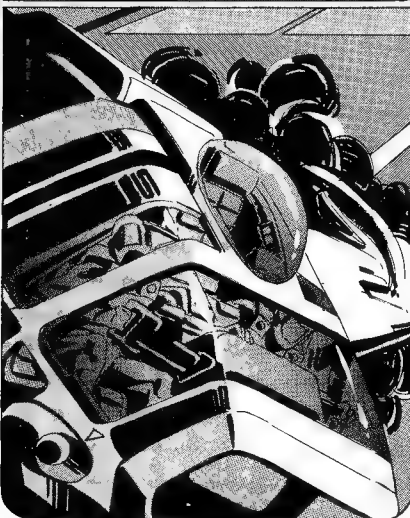
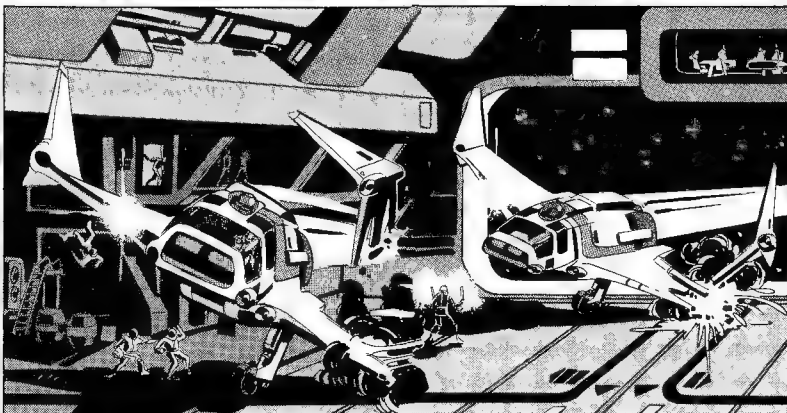
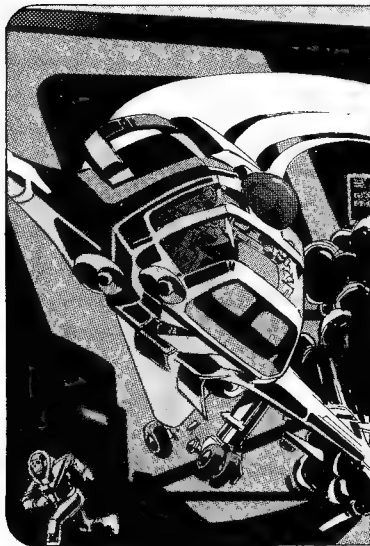
GIVE ME THE ORDER, YOUR WORSHIP! SANCTION THE LEGION FOR BATTLE! WE WILL STRIKE DOWN THOSE VILE DEMONS IN THE NAME OF MOTHER CHURCH!

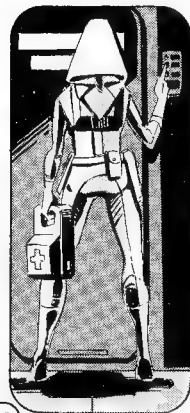
I'LL SUMMON ARCH-BISHOP FRANKLIN AND QUERY HIM--













FRANKLY, GENTLEMEN, I AM A LITTLE CONCERNED ABOUT AN EVENT THAT HAS JUST TAKEN PLACE. WE ARE NOW IN AN INCREDIBLY DANGEROUS POSITION-- AND THAT, I THINK IS OWING TO OUR OWN ACTIONS! I SHALL EXPLAIN: AT 0045 WE ATTAIN VISUAL CONTACT WITH THE OBJECT; A PERFECT TETRAHEDRON.



IT MEASURES APPROXIMATELY 50 KILOMETRES TO A VERTICE, WITH NO APERTURES, AND A SHEER SURFACE. THE OBJECT IS ABSOLUTELY STATIONARY. AT 0052 DATA IS COLLECTED. READINGS INDICATE PRESENCE OF LIFE PROCESSES WITHIN THE OBJECT. NO OTHER INFORMATION IS ATTAINABLE. AT 0056 THE OBJECT IS HAILED ON ALL FREQUENCIES, IN ALL LANGUAGES, PHONETIC, NUMERICAL AND GEOMETRIC. AT 0057 THE OBJECT FIRES UPON ST. CATHERINE'S WITH WEAPONRY AS YET UNASCERTAINED. THE A.S.C ENGINE SUFFERED SEVERE, POSSIBLY IRREPARABLE DAMAGE. NOW, AT 0100 PURIFIER JOSHUA TAKES IT UPON HIMSELF TO RETALIATE AND FIRES UPON THE OBJECT BEFORE WE CAN ASSESS EITHER ITS FIRE-POWER OR INTENT! AND THEN AT 0100 PURIFIER JOSHUA LEAVES THE BRIDGE, CONTRARY TO PROCEDURE AS WELL AS TO DIRECT ORDER. HE GARNERS THE LEGION AND AT 0133 EXTRAVEHICULAR ACTIVITY IS COMMENCED. THE LEGION OF PURIFICATION ATTACKS THE (FOR LACK OF A BETTER WORD) "MANEKINS" ISSUING FROM THE OBJECT. IN THE COURSE OF THIS ACTIVITY, THE LEGION SUFFERS FATALITIES OF APPROXIMATELY 50%, INCLUDING THE CRASH OF THE COMMAND SHIP IN THE HANGAR.

THE RESPONSIBILITY IS MINE, ARCH-BISHOP FRANKLIN, NOT JOSHUA'S. I SANCTIONED THE E.V.A.

YOU, YOUR HOLINESS?

JOSHUA CONVINCED ME THAT IT WOULD BE IN THE INTERESTS OF SAFETY TO RETALIATE FULL FORCE IMMEDIATELY!

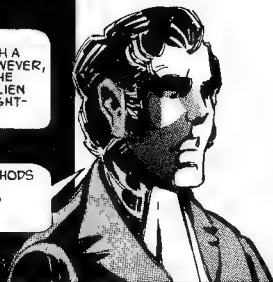
I WAS NOT CONSULTED!

THE SITUATION APPEARED TOO GRAVE-- TOO URGENT. BUT I AGREE, ARCH-BISHOP. THE ORDER WAS RASH AND RECKLESS-- AND APPARENTLY FUTILE. REMEMBER, I AM A CARDINAL, NOT A GENERAL. LET THE RECORD SHOW MY JUDGMENT IN THIS MATTER TO BE IMPRUDENT. THE ACTION WAS UNNECESSARY AND DANGEROUS. ERIC, CAN YOU SHED SOME LIGHT ON OUR DILEMMA?



YOUR WORSHIP... GENTLEMEN, IT IS OBVIOUS THAT WE ARE DEALING WITH A COGNITIVE, INTELLIGENT FORCE, HOWEVER, ACTUAL EVIDENCE INDICATES THAT THE SENSIBILITY OF THAT FORCE IS AS ALIEN TO US AS THE PHYSIOLOGY OF THE NIGHT-MARISH ANIMATIONS IT EMPLOYS IN BATTLE.

ITS ACTIONS, MOTIVATIONS AND METHODS HAVE PROVEN IRRATIONAL -- IF WE CONSTRAIN OURSELVES TO OUR OWN PRINCIPLE LOGIC.

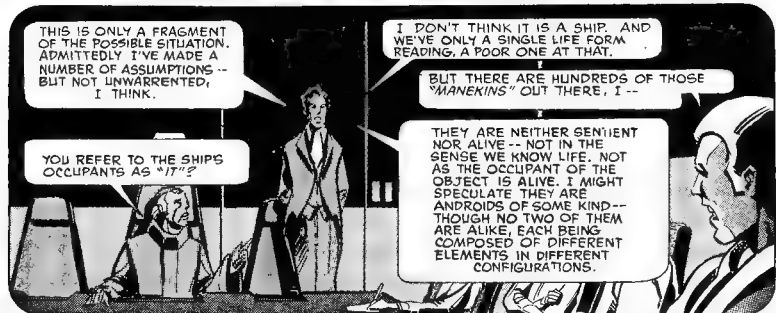




THE PATTERNS, GENTLEMEN, ARE TRULY ALIEN. I DOUBT THAT EVEN OUR COMPUTERS COULD APPROXIMATE THEM. NEVERTHELESS I WISH TO SET FORTH A POSTULATE BASED ON THIS DIVERGENCE FROM REASON; SUPPOSE, IN SOME MANNER, INDISCERNABLE TO OUR SENSES, WE WERE HAILED BY THE OBJECT. PERHAPS SOME SUBTLE MAGNETIC FLUCTUATION OR A CHANGE IN THE ALDEBO READINGS. OUR RESPONSE...

... DID NOT CONSIST OF THE EXPECTED MIMICRY--BUT, INSTEAD, OF A BARRAGE OF RADIO WAVES--A VIRTUAL ASSAULT OF INFORMATION. ALL POSSIBLE FREQUENCIES--AND A FRIGHTFUL NUMBER OF PATTERNS. WE TOOK FOR GRANTED ITS ABILITY AND COMMON SENSE TO SORT AND DECODE THE SIGNALS, JUST AS IT TOOK FOR GRANTED OUR ABILITY TO DETECT THEIR HAILING.

SUPPOSE, HOWEVER, SUCH AN ABRUPT AND INTENSE RESPONSE CONSTITUTED, TO ITS MIND, AN ACT OF HOSTILITY, AN ATTACK. THE PRESUMABLY UNIVERSAL INSTINCT OF SELF-PRESERVATION DICTATES RETALIATION.



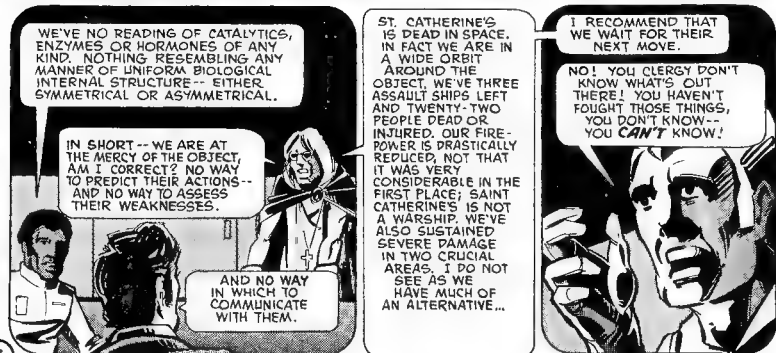
THIS IS ONLY A FRAGMENT OF THE POSSIBLE SITUATION. ADMITTEDLY I'VE MADE A NUMBER OF ASSUMPTIONS--BUT NOT UNWARRENTED, I THINK.

I DON'T THINK IT IS A SHIP. AND WE'VE ONLY A SINGLE LIFE FORM READING, A POOR ONE AT THAT.

BUT THERE ARE HUNDREDS OF THOSE "MANEKINS" OUT THERE, I--

YOU REFER TO THE SHIP'S OCCUPANTS AS "IT"?

THEY ARE NEITHER GENTLE NOR ALIVE--NOT IN THE SENSE WE KNOW LIFE. NOT AS THE OCCUPANT OF THE OBJECT IS ALIVE. I MIGHT SPECULATE THEY ARE ANDROIDS OF SOME KIND--THOUGH NO TWO OF THEM ARE ALIKE, EACH BEING COMPOSED OF DIFFERENT ELEMENTS IN DIFFERENT CONFIGURATIONS.



WE'VE NO READING OF CATALYTICS, ENZYMES OR HORMONES OF ANY KIND. NOTHING RESEMBLING ANY MANNER OF UNIFORM BIOLOGICAL INTERNAL STRUCTURE--EITHER SYMMETRICAL OR ASYMMETRICAL.

IN SHORT--WE ARE AT THE MERCY OF THE OBJECT, AM I CORRECT? NO WAY TO PREDICT THEIR ACTIONS--AND NO WAY TO ASSESS THEIR WEAKNESSES.

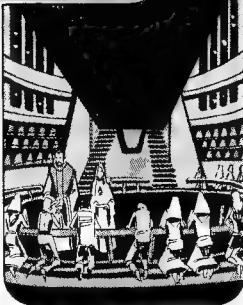
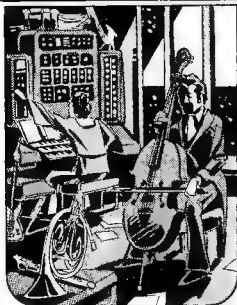
AND NO WAY IN WHICH TO COMMUNICATE WITH THEM.

ST. CATHERINE'S IS DEAD IN SPACE. IN FACT WE ARE IN A WIDE ORBIT AROUND THE OBJECT. WE'VE THREE ASSAULT SHIPS LEFT AND TWENTY-TWO PEOPLE DEAD OR INJURED. OUR FIRE-POWER IS PRACTICALLY REDUCED, NOT THAT IT WAS VERY CONSIDERABLE IN THE FIRST PLACE; SAINT CATHERINE'S IS NOT A WARSHIP. WE'VE ALSO SUSTAINED SEVERE DAMAGE IN TWO CRUCIAL AREAS. I DO NOT SEE AS WE HAVE MUCH OF AN ALTERNATIVE...

I RECOMMEND THAT WE WAIT FOR THEIR NEXT MOVE.

NO! YOU CLERGY DON'T KNOW WHAT'S OUT THERE! YOU HAVEN'T FOUGHT THOSE THINGS, YOU DON'T KNOW--YOU **CAN'T** KNOW!

ENOUGH, JOSHUA. THE MISSION IS IN A MOST PRECARIOUS POSITION. AND I FEAR WE HAVE LOST SIGHT OF THE FACT THAT THIS IS A **CHURCH**. RESTRAIN YOUR ZEAL. WE WILL TRUST IN GOD'S MERCY AND CONTINUE ON WITH OUR LIVES.



I DON'T UNDERSTAND THIS. DO YOU KNOW WHAT'S GOING ON? WHY DON'T THEY TELL US ANYTHING?

SISTER ELAINE! IF YOU WOULD PAY A LITTLE MORE ATTENTION TO THE BOY, HE'S WEAKENING!



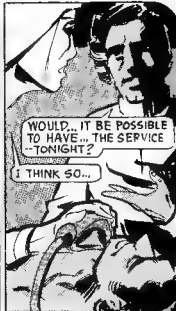
THE BOY, IS HE--?

I'M AFRAID SO, HE WAS BADLY HURT.



MY POOR MICHAEL...

THE LORD WILL HAVE MERCY. HE DIED WITH A PRAYER ON HIS LIPS.



WOULD... IT BE POSSIBLE TO HAVE... THE SERVICE --TONIGHT?

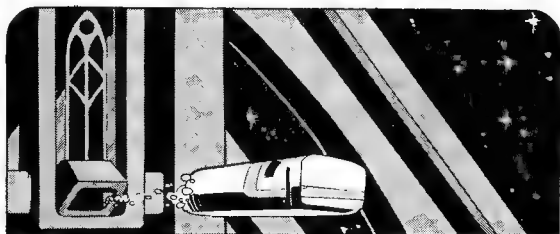
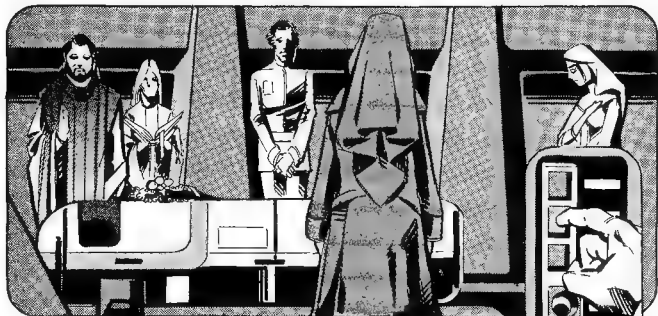
I THINK SO...



WOULD THAT BE POSSIBLE, FATHER?

CERTAINLY, SISTER. BRING HIM TO ST. MATTHEW'S CHAPEL...







aperture  
rupture

membrane  
activated

membrane  
secure

aperture  
rupture

membrane  
activated

membrane  
secure

aperture  
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membrane  
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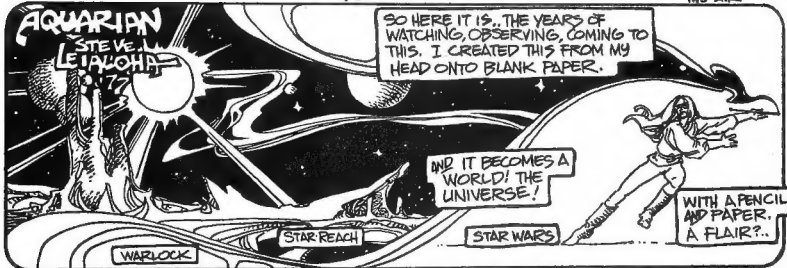
aperture  
rupture

membrane  
activated

membrane  
secure

THIS IS ST. MATTHEW'S CHAPEL!  
SEND HELP, RIGHT AWAY...  
NO! I *DON'T* KNOW WHAT  
HAPPENED, JUST GET SOMEONE  
DOWN HERE!

continued next issue



Would YOU buy  
a USED COMIC  
from this man?



PHOTO: SHELL DORF

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